The Courage of Christ

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Nov 10/10.

The Virtues of Christ Series

THE COURAGE OF CHRIST

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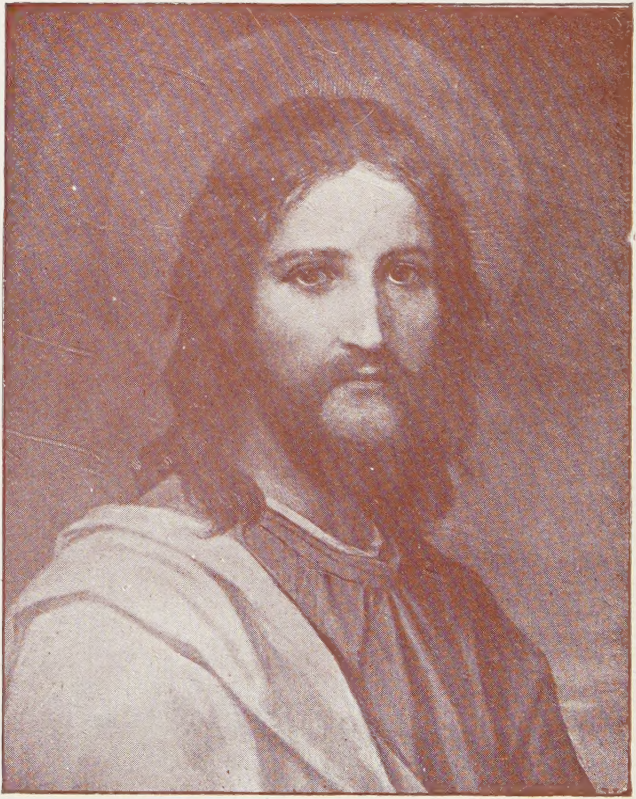

THE COURAGE OF CHRIST

BY

HENRY C. SCHUYLER, S. T. L.

PHILADELPHIA:
PETER REILLY, PUBLISHER

LONDON:
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., Ltd.

MCMX

46674

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J. F. LOUGHLIN, S. T. D., Censor Librorum

Imprimatur

✠ P. J. RYAN, Archiep. Philadelphiensis

Printed in United States

Copyright, 1909, Peter Reilly

Published November, 1909
Reprinted January, 1910

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION—THE STUDY AND IMITATION OF CHRIST 1

CHAPTER

I COURAGE IN ACTION 17

II COURAGE IN MENTAL SUFFERING 41

III COURAGE IN PHYSICAL SUFFERING 69

IV PERSEVERANCE IN COURAGE 97

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Our Model ..... *Frontispiece*

PAGE

Agony in the Garden 66

Christ at the Well 78

The Crucifixion 108

INTRODUCTION

THE STUDY AND IMITATION OF CHRIST

NO age has needed more the example of the God-man than the present one; nor has any age ever had so many opportunities to know Him as ours. And yet we, with all our advantages, with the rich results of close and continuous study of our Lord's life so easy of access, in an ever-increasing number of books and periodicals; we who are thus so much more favored than were our forefathers, are still far, very far, from knowing what we should about our Lord, and even farther from acting out this knowledge in our lives by following His example.

The necessity of striving to imitate our Saviour has been the great, pervading, predominant theme in the spoken and written

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The necessity of striving to imitate our Saviour has been the great, pervading, predominant theme in the spoken and written

words of the Apostles and their successors from the first sermon of St. Peter on Pentecost Sunday down to our own times. It is this same Saviour and His example that have formed the source and strength of all Christian teaching. Whether doctrine was taught or discipline enforced; whether virtues were praised or vices condemned; it was Christ, the God-man, who gave the inspiration and support to every form of Christian eloquence.

While the human, visible life of our Saviour was put before the people to move them to repentance, or urge them to greater sanctity, it was the inner, invisible life of grace, the indwelling of this same Saviour, that perfected the work begun by His personal example and by His teachings. This inner life of Christ in our souls presupposes a knowledge of Him and a disposition to follow His example. The two cannot be separated. If we are to become perfect Christians, it will only be by knowing

our Saviour better, by imitating His life, by making the Man Christ our ideal and model, so that His Divinity may live in our hearts with a life ever increasing and more intense in proportion as our words, thoughts and actions are more nearly like His words, thoughts and actions.

Christ then must be our model; we must imitate Him. But now at the very beginning we are confronted by a difficulty and by a danger. The difficulty is this: How can I ever hope to be like our Lord? The better I know Him, the more admirable does His character appear, and the further from attainment. The nearer I approach to a knowledge of the Divine Ideal, the wider stretches the gulf between my own imperfect self and His unlimited perfections. The temptation to discouragement is too great!

A difficulty like this ceases to be a difficulty when we approach the imitation of Christ with the spirit of faith and con-

fidence. It is true that Christ grows more beautiful to us, and more wonderful, as our knowledge of Him increases; and our own insignificance becomes more apparent. But this does not hinder us from coming nearer to His perfection. Our advancement may not have kept pace with our progress in the knowledge of Christ; but still it is advancement, and that should encourage us. If we are more patient and resigned to God's will now than we were last year, is our progress in these virtues any the less real, less meritorious, because during this year the patience and resignation of Christ have grown a hundred times more wonderful to us and more difficult of attainment? And further, if it is objected, "I don't know whether I am any better," we can answer that Christ reveals the beauty and excellence of His character only to those whom He loves, only to those who deserve a reward for their earnest efforts to imitate Him. Therefore if we

know Him better, if we have a keener realization of our own weakness, it is simply because we have come nearer to Him, and hence are more like Him. This better knowledge of ourselves and of Him is the reward He gives us for the progress we have made. Every one who attempts to follow Christ must expect to *feel* discouraged, but it is only weak souls who *give way* to this discouragement; only those who fail to see the meaning of St. Paul's words, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me," and who also forget the words of Christ Himself, "Be you therefore perfect as also your Heavenly Father is perfect."

As far as the danger is concerned, it does not arise from within the fold, where faith in the Divinity of our Lord is safeguarded by the infallible teaching authority of the Church; but comes rather from the atmosphere of doubt and unbelief which mingles with, and is apt to poison, the pure air of

revealed truth. Our danger lies in the insidious influence exerted upon our lives by direct and indirect contact with those who scoff at creed and dogma, who hold that it matters not what a man believes so long as he leads a good life; those who exalt the human nature of our Lord at the expense of the Divine, by looking upon Him, not as a personal, all-powerful God, but as a man only, a good man, one who surpasses all others in excellence, but still only a man; or those who, on the other hand, attribute so much to the Divinity of Christ that nothing, except a lifeless faith, is looked upon as necessary on our part for our salvation.

As a matter of fact, faith in the Divinity of Christ, without the guide of an infallible teaching authority, without the ever-present support of firm, Catholic assent to this teaching authority, has often felt the effects of this influence, and in many cases has undergone shipwreck upon its

hidden rocks. Many have come to praise Christ as man, to extol His virtues and urge the necessity of following His example; while at the same time they either deny outright, underestimate, or fail to mention, the Divinity that co-exists with the humanity and gives us the supernatural strength to follow perseveringly and consistently the example afforded by the human life of the Master.

God the Son became man that He might redeem us by His passion and death, and also that His example might enable us, thus ransomed by His precious blood, to gain Heaven. His wish that we follow Him is plainly written on every page of the New Testament: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me."

His disciples took literally His command, and left all things, father, mother, family,

house and possessions, in order that, following the footsteps of their Master in fact, as well as in spirit, they might all the better imitate His life. Their lives give additional evidence of Christ's twofold purpose in living among them as man. If there had been only one purpose in the Incarnation, to redeem us, it would not have been necessary for our Lord to have lived so long on earth. One drop of blood shed by the God-man, one tear, one sigh, being of infinite value, would have redeemed the world. Why then those long years of hidden and public life, when our ransom could have been paid in the first moments of our Saviour's life? Why did He endure the privations and sorrows of thirty-three years? Why did He cause the heart of Mary that unspeakable suffering beneath the cross of Calvary? The reason is not difficult to discover. That He might show us by His life how we should live; that in His life we might have

a perfect pattern for our lives, a lofty ideal for our inspiration and imitation.

And God alone knows how dire is the necessity for this ideal; how sadly we need a model to imitate, an example to follow. It is a fact acknowledged by all, proved by the universal experience of mankind, that example is more efficacious than words, no matter how wise these words may be and how eloquently spoken. Urge a man to do some noble deed. Tell him how posterity will praise him for it, how great a glory his fellow men will accord him, how much benefit humanity will gain from its performance; and you may move him to do it. But a far more convincing argument, a far stronger motive, would be the example of some fellow human being who spends his life in the performance of similar deeds. Tell a man he ought to be good, and you will not move him to lead a better life nearly so surely as if you

were to place before him the life of a great and good man for his imitation.

None of us is strong or self-reliant enough not to be influenced by the example of others. Imitation is a characteristic of human nature. The child imitates its parents. Men and women, to a greater or less extent, imitate each other. In doubt as to what to do, we unconsciously ask ourselves, "What would others do in a like situation? How would this man, whom I respect, act if he were in my place?" It is the example of those whom we love and admire the most that gives us, in many cases, a guide for our conduct. How necessary it is, then, to have a perfect model, one whose example could never lead us into error.

And such a model is offered us by the life of our Lord. If we seek for light in matters of conscience, or in affairs that are only of passing interest; if we wish a guide to direct us how to perform our duties to

church, state or family; if we are in need of some one to show us how to bear suffering, physical or mental, how to be resigned to the death of others, and finally to our own inevitable dissolution, we can find what we seek in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. In interior desolation and external trial, in family trouble and personal affliction, in the world of work and of social recreation, in pleasure and in pain, in the practice of virtue and the struggle against vice, Christ is the great, the unfailing, the perfect model for our imitation and support.

The more we know of this model, the more we wish to know. The deeper we delve into the inexhaustible mine of the riches of the knowledge of Christ, the harder it is to come back again to the surface, the more alluring becomes the still unexplored wealth of virtue. We are entranced with our study; we grow to love it. We become dissatisfied with the no-

bility of merely human character, once we have seen how good and noble the Man Jesus is. In every difficulty that presents itself in our lives, we look for a solution in the life of Christ. The key to all our problems lies hidden in the example He gives us. The pages of the New Testament that seemed dry to us before, now flash forth with a new beauty because they tell us about our Divine Model. His words are written there, and there is recorded His life.

We have no painting, no physical likeness of Christ as He appeared to the people of His times, but in the gospel we can trace the lineaments of His soul. There we see the heart and mind and will of our Model. Their grandeur draws us on irresistibly, and if we are really in earnest, every day of our lives will add some new touch of beauty to this picture of our Lord. And we ourselves shall grow more like it, and consequently more like the Original,

as our knowledge of Him increases. He ceases to be for us a vague, shadowy Personality who is so far above us that He may be admired at a distance, but not imitated. He becomes a friend, a living influence in our lives. Just as we speak to our friends here on earth, so we learn to talk to the Master. When we fall into sin, we seem to see His grieved and sorrowful face, just as a child looks into the face of a father or mother whom he may have offended. When we overcome a temptation, perform some act of charity, forgive an injury, we turn eagerly to our Lord for His approval and feel happy when we receive it, as a child who looks for praise from its parents.

In proportion as we know Him better, we begin more and more to live in Christ and for Him. Our souls feel more and more His influence, removing from them the clouds of sin that obscure the original

image of God. Line by line this early portrait of the Divinity appears, not a new imprint, but the first one, slowly but surely restored. And thus we live a life of preparation for that union with Him in Heaven, where St. John says, "We shall all be like to Him because we shall see Him as He is."

To promote the study of the Master's life; to present the virtues of His Sacred Humanity as models for imitation, so that they may find a fuller counterpart in our lives; in a word, to bring the Perfect, Sinless Man closer to His weak and fallen brothers, is the purpose of the author. This little volume is the first of a series, in each of which, circumstances permitting, one of the virtues of our Lord will be treated. Courage has been chosen as the first, because so arduous a task as the imitation of Christ requires at the very beginning a

more than ordinary courage, a courage that can find its source and support in the example of the Master and in His example alone.

The Courage of Christ

CHAPTER I

COURAGE IN ACTION

"And David said to Solomon his son: Act like a man, and take courage, and do: fear not, and be not dismayed."—1 Paral. xxviii, 20.

ON one occasion in the life of our Lord, the mother of James and John asks Him to give her two sons the first places in the Kingdom He was to establish. In answer our Lord asks a question, "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" Not only to James and John, but to each one of us is the same question put. Do we wish a place in the Kingdom of Heaven? If we do, we must be willing to drink the chalice of suffering that our

Lord drank. We must face trials and temptations, opposition and even failure, with something of the courage that He possessed. We must imitate in our lives the fortitude He manifested in His.

He expects us to drink the same chalice that He drank, though of course He will make due allowance for our infirmities. Therefore, since we are to do things and suffer things in imitation of His action and suffering, we must strive to possess that power, promptness and perseverance in action and endurance which He possessed. In other words, we must perfect ourselves in the virtue of fortitude by so strengthening the will in the pursuit of good that no difficulty, no danger, not even death itself, will cause it to draw back.

Christian fortitude, or courage, is something different from mere physical bravery. Right reason and free will must enter into it. Therefore, neither the madman, who is heedless of his own safety, nor the sui-

cide, who deliberately takes his own life, can be said to possess the virtue of fortitude. Those only are courageous, in the true sense, who are willing, with a firm, unwavering will, to do what they know is right. They may be afraid to do what their will moves them to do, that is, they may feel a natural timidity and may have to struggle with themselves in order to act in the face of this fear; but it is the actual doing or suffering that marks the brave man.

The soldier who rushes upon the enemy, feeling no fear and eager for the fight, is not nearly so brave as the one who feels his heart beating fast with natural fear, whose face is pale and hand trembling, but who, nevertheless, charges side by side with his more favored companion. It is easy for the one, hard for the other. Both are brave, but the timid soldier gains a double victory, one over himself, the other over the enemy; while his comrade, who feels

no fear, bears away the laurels of but a single triumph.

We may be brave, or courageous, either in what we do, or what we endure; in action or in suffering. The former is active fortitude; the latter, passive. Let us first take active fortitude, or courage in action, and consider this virtue in the life of our Divine Model, Jesus Christ.

For our present purpose we shall regard active fortitude as including not only the performance of great and noble deeds, but also the planning of them. To conceive some stupendous undertaking, to work out the details in one's mind, fully conscious of difficulties, and all the time to keep the will firmly attached to our plans, requires great courage. To foresee all the obstacles that will oppose us, and yet to keep steadily onward until the plan is ripe for execution, demands, in a certain sense, a higher courage than the actual accomplishment, when the excitement and inspiration of action

and tangible opposition have a tendency to lessen our natural timidity and instinctive repugnance. And right here we must remember that success does not increase, nor failure lessen, the moral worth of our fortitude. Provided our will remains firm and we make a prudent and persevering use of all legitimate means at our disposal, God rewards us just as much for a work that fails as for one that succeeds.

No better example of bravery in planning great works could be shown than that given us by our Lord in His hidden life. For thirty years He lived apart from the world, seemingly unmindful of the work He came to accomplish. His life after the return from Egypt was spent with His mother and foster-father at Nazareth. He worked, no doubt, at His trade of carpenter, seldom leaving His home save for an occasional journey to Jerusalem. Speaking naturally, He could have known little about the world He was to redeem and

save. His experience, in the eyes of His fellow-men, was limited. Yet the mind of Christ was greater than the world He lived in. Through the supernatural light that filled it, He saw plainly before Him the one great work He was to accomplish. This and the various minor details that fitted into His plan for our salvation were present to His mind as He worked by day at the carpenter's bench; as He sat in the evening by the open door of their little home; as He knelt at His mother's knees in early life, or prayed in later years in the solitude of His room. Many a night we can picture this youth of Nazareth gazing up at the stars that lit the heavens of Palestine, thinking of the lost sheep He must rescue; thinking too of the opposition destined to be His lot, of the slight return His work was to receive; thinking, perhaps, of the treachery of Judas, of Peter's denial. Before Him, as He prayed alone, there would flash the vision of Gethsemane, of

Calvary and its cross, and oh! the hardest of all to bear, the sight of His mother weeping beneath the cross. He Himself could suffer, but to cause His mother pain; that mother who had so fondly bade Him good-night but a short time before; who even now, no doubt, was also kneeling in prayer for the world He was planning to save: this was almost unbearable. And yet, unless it were done, His work could not be accomplished. Well, so let it be. But then another dark cloud envelops His soul. His sufferings and the sufferings of His mother, even these would fail to save so many millions of men. He sees souls falling headlong into hell in spite of all. He sees some of His very followers indifferent to His plans, unwilling to help Him, to work for Him. And all this was present to His mind for years before He started His active work. No mind ever conceived a plan destined to be opposed so violently; no mind ever foresaw opposition so clearly;

and no will ever persisted so unfalteringly as did our Saviour's.

At last the years of planning came to an end, the time for action was at hand. Knowing, as God, all that the three years of public ministry held in store for Him, it was indescribably hard for our Lord to take the first step in His life work, to break off all home ties, leave His mother, His beloved home, His neighbors and friends in Nazareth, and go out alone into the world. Bear in mind that He was man as well as God, that He loved His mother and the quiet home-life of His native town. It was just as hard for Him to make these first sacrifices demanded by His mission, as it would have been had He not been the Son of God; and harder, because, being a perfect Son, His love for His mother was the strongest ever existing between mother and son. But for years He had planned at a certain time to take the first step, and when that time came duty rose above all

human ties. He did not hesitate for a moment; but, bidding His mother and relatives good-by, left for the banks of the Jordan to receive baptism at the hands of John.

Most of us are capable of planning great things, we make many good resolutions, and really while we are thus planning and resolving we have a sincere will to act according to our convictions. But when the time for action comes, we hesitate, we begin to excuse ourselves, to bring up objections to our own plans. "After all," we say, "perhaps I was a little hasty, a little presumptuous; maybe I was unduly influenced by my emotions. Wouldn't it be better to wait awhile, or do something less difficult?" Take, *e.g.*, our good resolutions at the end of a mission, or after an exceptionally fervent confession and act of contrition. Oh, how easy it then seems to avoid sin and its occasions! We'll never run any risks in the future; we'll give up certain compan-

ions, keep away from such and such a place, stop reading certain books. And with high hopes we leave the church, and start on our life anew. But possibly within a few hours, or even minutes, our feeling of fervor disappears. The glow and after-glow of exalted sentiment fade away, and we see life and trouble and temptation and sin in all their cold reality. Then our will weakens; we waver, forgetting that God's grace is with us just as abundantly, just as strongly as when we felt good spiritually; we yield and fall. All because we are weak-hearted and cowardly and lack the virtue of fortitude.

To act bravely in every circumstance of life requires a previous training. Christ taught us this by His hidden life at Nazareth. He taught it also, and in a special manner, by His forty days' fast in the desert. We would think that now at last, after He has left Nazareth and been baptized by John, He will enter at once on

His active ministry. But no, thirty years is not enough. He must have a further, a more immediate preparation. He goes up into a mountain near Jericho and there spends forty days in works of penance and mortifications never equaled in intensity either before His time or since then. He was alone with such a loneliness He never felt afterwards, save in Gethsemane and on the cross. Accustomed to the companionship of His mother, to her eager, loving anxiety to satisfy all His wants, accustomed to the moderate comforts of His little home, the change was harsh and abrupt, and it was all the harder because self-inflicted. But He had planned it as one of His first steps, and therefore it must be endured. He fasted and prayed and fought off the feelings of loneliness and physical weariness. The body shrank from the ills that threatened it, but the will was stronger than the flesh, and kept it in subjection, kept it ever present to the hardships that

daily grew greater. At last the devil appeared to Him, thinking that surely He could no longer resist temptation. But He thought wrongly. The body was terribly wasted and weak, but the will never stood stronger than on the fortieth day, when Satan suggested that Jesus appease his hunger by means of bread produced in a miraculous manner from the stones lying about Him. The poisoned dart glanced harmlessly off the impenetrable armor of the soul of the God-man. But another attack was made at once. Jesus is taken to the pinnacle of the temple and urged to throw Himself down. God would support Him if He were truly His Son. Again the devil fails. A third time he returns to the attack. If He will fall down and adore the devil, Jesus will be made king of the whole world. A third defeat.

Notice how the fortitude of our Lord shows itself here. In every case His answer to the devil is direct and immediate;

no argument, no parleying. The words of Sacred Scripture itself are used to turn the attack of Satan. A rash and presumptuous man, especially if he possessed the power Christ possessed, would have listened to the tempter, would have tried to confound and outwit him by changing the stones into bread or by throwing himself from the temple, if he had been sure, as Jesus was, that the Father would assist him. Not so with our Lord. He repulses His assailant at once, and thus teaches us to be equally prompt in turning away from temptation, even though we feel contempt for it and have no desire to yield. True courage in the presence of temptation does not consist in standing one's ground, but in retreating at once. Jesus could have performed the miracle at the devil's suggestion had He so willed. He might have changed the stones to bread and then refused to eat. He might have thrown Himself from the temple and saved Himself from in-

jury. But He wished to show us that when the tempter is at hand we must not make even the slightest concession.

Let us pass now to the ministry of Jesus. He begins at once after leaving the desert to gather together a band of disciples. With these he visits Cana and Capharnaum, and then, on the approach of the Pasch, goes to Jerusalem. It is here that we see a remarkable exhibition of courage on the part of our Lord. He comes to the city, to the temple, as an ordinary pilgrim, no different in the eyes of the Jews from the thousands of others that throng the courts of the sacred edifice. And yet He is brave enough to do what others have never dared to do; what even the priests and the high-priests themselves had been too cowardly to do. For years an abuse had been tolerated in the outer courts of the very house of God itself. Those who paid their annual visit to the temple at Jerusalem were supposed to offer as sacri-

fice to God, cattle, sheep, or, if they were poor, a pair of doves. To supply these objects of sacrifice, merchants had placed stands within the temple, and were selling the various animals to be offered in sacrifice. Thus the approaches to the temple and its outer courts were converted into market places. No one, up to the coming of Jesus, had dared to interfere with this deplorable custom. Now there comes an obscure pilgrim from Nazareth, a town held in contempt by the Jews, who used to say, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" And this unknown man dares to condemn a practice that the leaders in Israel were tolerating. And this condemnation does not show itself in mere words, but in deeds.

Filled with a righteous indignation, despising the weak inaction of those who should have long since broken up the abuse, and consumed with a holy zeal for the glory of His Father's house, Jesus overturns the

tables of the merchants and money-changers, takes up a knotted cord and, rushing upon the desecrators of the sacred place, drives them out of the temple. No resistance was made, either by the merchants themselves or by the Jewish priests, for they felt in their hearts that this daring newcomer was right and that they were wrong. Jesus, too, knew that He was in the right, and it was this knowledge that gave Him the courage to do what others feared to do.

We, too, may be called upon to stand up for the right when others are too careless or too cowardly to do it. When we are thus called upon, we need not be afraid to act according to our convictions, even though every one seems to be against us. Only let us be sure that we are right, and then we may go ahead. Notice that in driving out the buyers and sellers from the temple it was for His Father's glory that Jesus acted. Let this be our motive too.

If it is a question of the good of religion, the salvation of our own souls, or the souls of others, we need never be afraid to act, to stand up for the right, to oppose the wrong. Those who are against us must yield in the end, because they, like the Jews in the temple, cannot fail to feel in their hearts that they are wrong and we are right.

Often in His public life our Lord had to correct abuses, to rebuke even His closest friends, His very apostles. Remember His answer to the mother of James and John when she asked as a favor that her two sons stand, one at His right hand, the other at His left in the Kingdom of Heaven: "You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" It isn't so difficult to run the risk of offending those whom we do not know, or who are opposed to us, as it is to hurt our friends, or even our relatives, by standing up for the right and defending God's in-

terests. And yet sometimes we may be forced to incur the suspicion and even the anger of those we love, because God's honor may require it. Sometimes we are forced to hurt the feelings of our friends by doing what is right, what it is our duty to do. We must in these cases be brave as our Lord was, trusting that in the end those whom we offend will love us all the more for our devotion to our duty as we see it.

As might be supposed, the daring action of Christ in driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple caused a great deal of talk and stirred up not a little opposition and ill-feeling toward this new Reformer. Especially bitter against Jesus were the leaders of the Jews. They watched Him closely and whenever possible sought to stir up the people against Him. They were very successful, too. By the time our Lord made His second paschal visit to Jerusalem He had many enemies in the city. Every

true reformer must expect this. Most of the accusations brought against our Lord at this time were based upon the over-severe, and often silly, interpretations that the doctors of the law put upon the third commandment, "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day." Our Lord worked miracles, healed the people, in a word, did good, just as much on the sabbath as on any other day. And because He did this He was accused of breaking the sabbath.

We all know how hard it is to go against an established custom, how truly courageous is a man who opposes what the people, misguided and prejudiced, have come to regard as right and proper. Here were the Jews really believing that it was wrong to perform an act of charity for a neighbor on the sabbath. Our Lord knew this, and He knew also that they would resent His acting contrary to their views. He knew that by so acting He would antagonize the priests and shock the people themselves.

Yet His mission was to correct abuses, to teach the truth, to establish a new law of love in place of the dry, fruitless formalism of the Scribes and Pharisees. In fulfilling this mission He was absolutely fearless, unmoved by human respect. Let us take but one instance. During the second paschal visit to Jerusalem, our Lord meets, on the sabbath day, by the pond called Probatica, a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. The Divine Healer is moved with compassion and determines to heal him. He foresees what effect this will have upon the people. Nevertheless, He goes up to the man and gives him back his health and strength. Of course, the news of this additional defiance of Jewish tradition and practice quickly spread abroad, and therefore, as St. John tells us, "did the Jews persecute Jesus because He did these things on the sabbath." They openly accuse Him of breaking the commandments, and our Lord gives additional evi-

dence of His courage by His answer to them. He plainly asserts that He is the Son of God, equal to the Father, and thus above all their laws and customs, above their reproaches and accusations: "My Father worketh until now and I work." In the eyes of the Jews it was bad enough for Christ to break the laws they looked upon as so sacred, bad enough to defy the traditions held by a whole nation; but for Him to claim God as His Father, this was simply unbearable. "Hereupon the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He did not only break the sabbath, but also said God was His Father, making Himself equal to God."

Although opposition to Christ was very pronounced during the second year of His public ministry, it did not reach its fullest force and malice until the weeks immediately preceding the tragedy of Calvary. The raising to life of Lazarus and the curing of the blind man outside the walls of

Jericho were the last straws, so to speak. His enemies could stand it no longer. It was better, as they put it, for Jesus to die than for the whole nation to perish. Our Lord was fully aware that this feeling of deadly hatred for Him existed. He knew He was to be put to death within a short time. Had he not Himself three times foretold this death to His Apostles? And yet, with a calm, unshaken courage He finished the work He had to do. Fearlessly He went to Jerusalem, carried out all the details as He had planned them, and when the time came allowed Himself to be seized in Gethsemane, condemned in Pilate's palace, and crucified on Calvary. No one else could have given such conclusive proof of courage as this.

In His hidden life at Nazareth He had faced unflinchingly the future years of struggle and of suffering. No less unflinching was He in His later life as He met one by one the various trials He had long

thought about in silence and retirement. The one great struggle of His life was against sin. Every battle He entered into, all that He did, all that He suffered, was occasioned by, was an integral part of, this momentous conflict. It was His life work. And in order to secure ultimate triumph, as He had planned to secure it, He not only had to fight in person, but had also to organize an army to fight under Him. Here we see, probably, the most daring and courageous phase of His character. Of Himself He was sure. For the final success of His own efforts He had no fear. But the human elements entering into His plan were weak and uncertain because they were human. It required great courage to form His army, God's Church, out of men as uneducated and vacillating and carnal, as even the chosen twelve were. It was poor material He had to work with, taking it at its best. But He knew that God's grace would fill the great gap between the

imperfection of human effort and the perfect ideal He had set before Him as His standard.

He was sure of Himself and He was sure of the human forces He had chosen to use as His instruments, because it was God's will that our redemption and salvation be accomplished in this way. It was God's will that He undertake the work. It was God's will that He plan and act and suffer. It was God's will that He attack sin, that He wage unto death the warfare with satan. As He tells us Himself, "I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me." He knows He is doing the will of His Father in all things, and therefore He is always calm and confident, patient and persevering. Therefore He is brave, willing to do all things, to dare all things, to suffer all things, that the will of the Father who sent Him might be accomplished.

CHAPTER II

COURAGE IN MENTAL SUFFERING

> "The patient man is better than the valiant: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities."—Proverbs, xvi, 32.

WE see much to admire, much to imitate in the active bravery of Christ. Never will any one be able to portray in sufficiently vivid colors His courage in planning and executing great things for the glory of His Father. Still, with all that, there is something nobler, more admirable, more necessary of imitation in His passive fortitude, in His calm, uncomplaining endurance of the mental and physical suffering that fell to His lot on earth. This is true, not because His active courage failed to reach the highest

possible perfection, but because, taking it in itself, it is not so noble and praiseworthy as passive fortitude. It is harder to endure than to act, harder to suffer than to do, harder to bear trials than to accomplish things. In action we are often helped by our feelings, carried along by excitement, stimulated by applause. In suffering we have, for the most part, a constant conflict with feeling; the mind is not excited as it is in action, but on the contrary is depressed by enforced inaction. People as a rule do not see us suffer, do not appreciate the internal conflict, do not applaud, but often condemn, what they have no sympathy for, and what they sometimes look upon as cowardice. Therefore, in truth, "the patient man is better than the valiant."

The essence of fortitude consists in keeping the will firm in spite of all attempts to weaken it. The more powerful these attempts are, the greater is the virtue of fortitude by which we resist and overcome

them. To bear with the sadness that results from opposition, desertion of friends, loss of health; to feel acutely the unavoidable depression and internal agony, discouragement and loneliness, irritation and even anger, that strive to weaken the will, and at the same time to keep the will firmly set against them, firmly attached to what we know to be our duty: this is the perfection of fortitude. The man who thus rules the spirit that rebels and rises constantly against the will is "better than he that taketh cities."

Our wills can be weakened either by pain of the body or by pain of the mind and heart. We shall study first in our Divine Model His patient endurance of the latter form of suffering, treating of a few of the many forms of that internal pain which made Him in very truth "the man of sorrows."

Once more we must recall a most important fact: that Christ as man was capa-

ble of feeling sorrow and sadness, that these bore heavily upon Him, that He was keenly sensitive to all the impressions of feeling, except in so far as they were sinful. His heart could be wounded by ingratitude, false accusation, indifference and persecution, to a greater extent than the heart of any other man. We must not think that the fact that He was God made mental suffering impossible for Him. No, it rather heightened His capability of such suffering, since this suffering was occasioned willfully, or through carelessness, by those who should have recognized His divinity, and thus refrained from giving Him any cause for suffering.

Our Lord loved all men and came on earth to save them. He came to cast the fire of His love upon the earth and wished it to be enkindled in the hearts of His creatures, now by the Incarnation made His brothers. For this purpose He planned

during the long years at Nazareth. For this purpose He preached and taught and prayed day and night in the fields and cities, on the hillsides and in the synagogues of Judea and Galilee. For this purpose He raised the dead to life and gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick and strength to the weak. And yet, what return did He receive? After all, when He died on the cross there stood by Him but one man and a few women. Where were the thousands He had helped? Where were the disciples? Where was Peter, who had so boldly declared himself ready to die for his Master? Should not at least His apostles have pressed close to the cross of their Leader and proved their gratitude by the silent loyalty of their presence?

The New Testament gives us so many examples of ingratitude to our Lord, of carelessness and coldness, that we can find them on almost every page. People seemed

to think that no obligation of love bound them to their benefactor. Curiously they hastened to His side and listened to His words. Eagerly and with an intense selfishness they brought their sick to Him to be cured. And when the cure was effected, the wonder wrought, straightway they forgot the Great Healer and went their way. Take for example the cure of the ten lepers. Our Lord tells them to go, show themselves to the priests. "And it came to pass as they went they were made clean." Of these ten, but one returns to give thanks to his benefactor. Our Lord noticed the absence of the other nine, and that He felt it keenly is shown by His question, so patiently put to the one who was grateful, "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

Judas walked daily with the Master, heard His private and public words of instruction and exhortation, received with the

other apostles the tenderest tokens of love and affection, consumed the sacred body and drank the precious blood at the last supper—and then went out into the night and sold his God for thirty pieces of silver. Did not Jesus feel this? Did He not know it beforehand, too? Even when He chose Judas to go with Him as one of His specially appointed helpers? And since He knew it beforehand, the pain of that blackest treason was present in His spirit for many a long day as He walked by the side of Judas and patiently poured His love into the unworthy, treacherous heart. Can we not conceive something of the sadness that this one act of ingratitude must have caused? And then multiply it by millions and tens of millions, and you have a weak idea of how bitter must have been the battle, as one act of ingratitude after another flung itself against the will of Jesus and strove to break down its firm, unflinching front. But our Lord bore it all, and with

it all was, to the eyes of His followers and all who met Him, just as serene and cheerful and anxious to help others as if His heart were filled to overflowing with the gladness that would have filled it had those whom He served given Him even some slight evidence of permanent gratitude and appreciation.

I doubt if any influence has a stronger tendency to weaken the will, and make us lose our patience with others, than that exerted upon us by the ingratitude of those whom we help. This ingratitude may show itself in indifference and coldness, or in positive opposition and hatred. Either is bad enough, but the former, to a sensitive nature, is harder to bear than the latter. Positive enmity has some cause or fancied cause. Our enemies at least think about us, and they may believe that they are right. But he who has been benefited by another, and then straightway forgets his benefactor, forgets him even while he is

enjoying the benefit conferred upon him, such a one tries the patience more than an open enemy.

It is an essential part of the virtue of fortitude, taken in its passive sense, to endure ingratitude, though it be of the blackest kind. We may be even called upon to continue showering favors upon those who are indifferent and even unfriendly. It requires a strong will in such cases not to be influenced by our feelings and give up doing our duty simply because we get no immediate return for our efforts and our sacrifices. To continue helping those whom we know from past experience will make no return and will fail to appreciate our work for them, to continue treating them kindly and acting toward them just the same as if they were as grateful as they should be; to overcome the sadness that must affect us at the thought of the ingratitude of others, possibly of those who had been our closest

friends; to go on from day to day meeting them and treating them patiently for Christ's sake: this is courage, and meritorious courage, because its motive is the purest that could possibly move us—love of God and desire to imitate His only begotten Son.

Many of the trials our Lord had to endure, especially those of daily occurrence, were caused by a misunderstanding of His real mission amongst men. He was constantly called upon to exercise patience with the people, who failed to grasp the spiritual nature of the kingdom He had come to establish. The Jews for centuries had been looking forward to a king who was to reorganize the nation and lead it on to world-wide dominion. They had gradually lost sight of the spiritual character of the promised redeemer, and expected him to be a great temporal ruler. Consequently when our Lord announced Himself as the long expected Messiah, the Jews looked upon Him to free them from the yoke of Rome,

to restore them to their former glory and independence. We see evidences of this feeling in their efforts to make Him king after the multiplication of the loaves by the Sea of Galilee, and also in the triumphal procession of Palm Sunday. Even the apostles, the chosen followers of our Lord, shared this expectation. They were too ambitious, too carnal to understand that Christ's real purpose was to restore the kingdom of His Father in the hearts of men. "O foolish and slow of heart," is the reproach addressed by Christ to two disciples on the day of His resurrection; it is the reproach He constantly could have given to those whom He strove to raise to that higher plane of spiritual perception from which alone His actions and teaching could be appreciated. How significant, too, are His words to Philip at the last supper, "Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known me?"

It is hard to work for those who do not

understand our motives, who fail utterly to grasp the fundamental principles upon which our teaching rests. It is hard to live with, and to be perseveringly patient with, those who see things in an entirely different light from what we do. The heart of our Lord was filled to overflowing with zeal for His Father's glory. That and that alone was what He had in view. It was uppermost in His mind. For Him to be without friends who could sympathize with this one great purpose of His; to be forced continually to correct false impressions; to have no one to look at things the way He did; to see His followers seeking themselves and their own interests where He wanted them to forget self and work solely for the establishment of a spiritual kingdom: this was the condition that at all times accompanied our Lord and forced Him into an unceasing, though ever successful, conflict with the

natural feelings of sadness, discouragement and impatience.

On one occasion our Lord was going through Samaria to Jerusalem and some disciples sent ahead to prepare for Him were rudely repulsed. Returning they told of this reception, and James and John, filled with anger, cried out, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? And turning He rebuked them, saying: You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls but to save." Intense ignorance of the mission and method of Christ was also shown at the close of the agony in the garden when St. Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest who was with the band that came to seize Jesus. Our Lord bears with this folly, heals the wounded man with an appeal for patience, "Suffer ye thus far."

Another illustration, one of a different

kind, is afforded us by the unreasonable request of the mother of James and John, who begs for her two sons the first places in the kingdom. Of course, Jesus is forced to rebuke her, but He does so gently, without that indignation which her selfishness merited. On another occasion, when our Lord was at Capharnaum preaching and working miracles, the apostles began to dispute among themselves as to who should be the greater in the kingdom of heaven. How trying this carnal contention must have been to our Lord! Just at the time when He was working hard for others, and striving to teach by His example a complete forgetfulness of self, here are His apostles, those who are to carry on His work after the Ascension, quarreling as to who will receive the greatest reward. Our Lord, reading their hearts, makes no direct reference to their selfishness, but brings a child into their midst, and warns them that unless their souls are as simple and guile-

less as the soul of an innocent child they may expect no part at all in the kingdom that is to come.

If our Lord was thus misunderstood by His closest followers, if even they failed to grasp the deep purport of His preaching, we need not be surprised at the great mass of the Jews remaining indifferent to His doctrine, and only concerning themselves with Him when led to do so by motives of curiosity or self-seeking. Nor need we be surprised, taking into account the intense selfishness and corruption of the leaders of the people, that our Lord was not merely misunderstood, but falsely accused and persecuted in every possible way that prudence permitted.

Since Christ's purpose was to save every soul, He did not hesitate to associate with all classes in so far as it was necessary and useful for their salvation. Consequently we see Him attending marriage feasts, and even going to banquets at the homes of

Pharisees, who hated Him and only invited Him out of curiosity or to entrap Him, if possible, in some speech or action. We see Him going so far as to choose, for one of His apostles, Levi, whose occupation as collector of taxes for the Romans rendered him extremely hateful to the Jews. Even the Samaritans, detested by every orthodox Jew, were visited by our Lord. Pagans, too, were not outside His all-embracing charity, even though He tells us He was sent to the children of the house of Israel. Witness His kindness in curing the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman, whose faith at first He tries so severely. Charitable acts like these were of course misunderstood by the Jews, who to a man were jealous of their national religion, and most exclusive. No dealings at all were permitted with the Samaritans. For a religious teacher, as our Lord was, to break away from the traditions and customs they looked upon as almost divine, was incomprehensi-

ble. So they questioned His orthodoxy, even asserting that He was a Samaritan. They bring charges, too, against His manner of living. He heard these charges and thus refers to them: "The Son of man is come eating and drinking: and you say: behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine." The charge was so utterly absurd that our Lord makes no effort to clear Himself, knowing that His life is the best possible refutation. Yet how it must have saddened Him to think that His love for souls would lead others to make accusations as utterly false and contemptible as these were.

The miracles worked by our Lord were a constant source of anxiety to the Pharisees. That they were unusual, to say the least, and far surpassing the power of man, was too evident to be denied. The enemies of Christ feared that the people, deeply impressed by this exhibition of supernatural power, would be led, at least by fear, to

acknowledge the worker of the wonders as something more than human. So they seize upon an ingenious method of neutralizing this influence of our Saviour's. They acknowledge the greatness of the miracles. How could they help it? But they assert that Jesus has His power, not from heaven, but from hell, not from God, but from the devil. They often charge the Son of God with being thus aided by satan. On one occasion, when He had cast a devil out of a man, and the multitudes were in admiration at it, some of the people said: "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Certainly this would have provoked a crushing rebuke from one less trained to self-restraint than was our Saviour. But with the calm, unimpassioned manner that characterized all His dealings with those who misjudged and reviled Him, He utters no indignant denial, no stern reproach, but condescends to reason with His enemies: "Every kingdom divided

against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall. And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because you say that through Beelzebub I cast out devils."

On another occasion, when they make the same charge, saying, "Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?" Jesus contents Himself with a simple denial: "I have not a devil." Then, as on other occasions, they take up stones to put him to death, and our Lord is forced to flee from their anger. If we could only realize who it is that the Jews thus accuse, if we could only appreciate His position, if we could only understand how deeply His heart was wounded by those whom He came to save, those who based their false and blasphemous accusations upon the very words and acts by which He showed His love for them; then we might form some

idea of the perfection of patience and long suffering manifested by our Lord.

False accusations against Jesus reach their climax in His trial before the Sanhedrin, early in the morning of the first Good Friday. The charges made on this occasion were not the result of a rash and hasty judgment, or even of a culpable misunderstanding of what Christ had said and done. They were deliberate lies; and those who thus perjured themselves by uttering them had been instructed beforehand to perform this dastardly work. St. Matthew tells us that "the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus that they might put Him to death." How does our Lord conduct Himself as He hears His accusers speaking the most apparent untruths concerning Him and the character of His mission? They assert that he is an impostor, a blasphemer, a hypocrite, and yet, in the words of the Evangelist: "Jesus held His peace." At

last, when adjured by the high priest to say whether or not He is the Son of God, Jesus admits that He is. "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him: and others struck His face with the palms of their hands." Indignities are heaped upon Him for hours, but meekly He bears it all; allows Himself to be hailed as a mock king; permits the soldiers to put a reed in His hands as a scepter, and a crown of thorns upon His head. And at last He appears publicly in the streets of the city bearing His cross as a common criminal, journeys uncomplainingly to Calvary, and gives final evidence of perfect patience by forgiving His persecutors and praying for them as He dies on the cross.

It is hard to endure silently the accusations of others, even when we know that they are true or have some foundation in fact. We resent them because we feel that in many cases those who censure us have no right to express themselves as they do,

since God did not appoint them to judge us. Our impatience at being thus accused and talked about, whether deservedly or undeservedly, often leads us to make counter-charges, and thus we fall into the very fault we complain of in others. But when the accusations are absolutely false, when we know that we have given no cause for them, when we feel that we are innocent, then it is that the spirit chafes under restraint and strives with all the power of concentrated resentment to force us not only to declare our innocence in violent and bitter words, but to retaliate upon those who calumniate us. It makes little difference to us whether the false accusation results from hasty judgment or deliberate malice, whether our accusers are in good faith or not. The injury to our reputation is just the same independently of the motives prompting the one who injures us.

Our Divine Lord had the worst possible accusations uttered against Him. Those

who thus accused Him were in many cases prompted by deliberate malice. They knew that what they said was false, and yet the most vindictive of our Lord's accusers, His bitterest enemies, were the objects of His intense affection. While they plotted and worked for His death, He continued praying for their salvation, continued with even greater efforts to turn their hearts to the truth. When the accusations become too serious, He contents Himself with a simple denial. No counter-charges, no abuse, no hatred, no spite, no thought of revenge and retaliation do we meet with in Christ's dealings with His calumniators. No, on the contrary there is an increase of love, because they who sinned against Him needed greater love and greater patience on His part.

So far we have mentioned the suffering caused by the ingratitude, the misunderstanding and false charges of others; but there was inflicted on the divine heart of

our Saviour even greater suffering than this, and that was the sadness resulting from what we may call the vision of sin—the foreknowledge of all the crime and unspeakable iniquity of the ages to come. Being divine our Lord possessed the power to part the veil that hid the future, and consequently every thought, act, word or omission contrary to the will of His Father was present to His mind at all times just as vividly as if it were actually occurring before His eyes.

How often do we feel that had we known beforehand what the wisdom of God kindly concealed from us, we might not have persevered. How often have we cause to thank God, who hid from our sight what the future had in store for us. Could we, *e.g.*, have been so kind and considerate to a friend, or one under our charge, had we known how ungrateful he was going to be, how indifferent and even hostile he would become? Our Lord knew, when

He worked and prayed for all men, and when He suffered and died for them, what little return He was going to receive. He knew that many a soul in future years would carelessly or deliberately reject His aid, spurn His proffered help, and fall into mortal sin. All the agony caused by other pains was slight in comparison with this great grief. He felt it all through His life, and yet He hid in His heart the burden of sorrow, and outwardly remained unmoved, always calm and patient, active and persevering in helping others. In Gethsemane we have the culmination of the life-long struggle of the will against the depression and discouragement, the intense pain that feeling inflicted upon Him. Other elements helped to intensify His agony as the spirit fought against the flesh; but the knowledge that men would repeatedly wound the loving heart of His Father in heaven, the knowledge that sin after sin would be piled up in the centuries to come,

until the mass of iniquity, mountain high, would threaten to crush the feeble efforts of the few to give glory to God: this it was that almost broke the heart of the God-man as He lay in the Garden and prayed for strength to fight on until the end. "Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from me." It seems as if His will of iron is giving way; but no, for immediately there come the words of strength and resignation, "Nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt."

All of us have our Gethsemane, trivial as it may be in comparison with Christ's. We too have moments of mortal conflict with the feelings of discouragement and sadness. There are times when it seems as if patience were no longer possible. We feel that we can bear our trials no longer. The internal conflict threatens to force itself to the surface, to reveal itself to others. It is no sign of undue weakness if we do show external marks of our struggle with

the flesh. Our Lord's agony in Gethsemane testifies to this. But He went apart from others, and so must we. We too must go into the garden, into the secrecy of the night; we must withdraw into the seclusion of our own souls, and there in prayer fight our battle by ourselves. Oh, how lonely it is; how bitterly and relentlessly Satan, without pity, brings his power to bear upon us. Not a ray of light to break the gloom. Everything has failed to help us. Prayer itself becomes the repetition of dry, meaningless words. What is the use of it all? We have tried hard, prayed hard, done our best, fought a good fight; and still never have we seemed so weak as now. The future faces us with an unending prospect of even harder struggles. Unending? No! We raise our eyes and try to pierce the gloom, and there, afar off, we see a faint rift in the clouds of despair. Prayer after prayer hurries from heart to lips. Hope that has lain helpless

springs up once more. The light grows stronger. The figure of Christ, glorified, takes shape in the dissolving gloom. His tender eyes pierce to the inmost recesses of our hearts, lighting them with grace, warming them with love. His gentle, patient face, aglow with sympathy and encouragement, brings new strength to our souls. We rise from our struggle and go to our Saviour. He takes us by the hand; builds up our poor, broken, fallen wills with His grace, leads us out of the garden of grief, out of the night of depression and despair, to our every-day work and trials, to begin once more, cheered by His presence and example, our life of warfare with Satan, with the world, and with ourselves.

CHAPTER III

COURAGE IN PHYSICAL SUFFERING

> "For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps."—I Peter ii, 21.

CHRIST our Leader, under whose standard we have been enrolled through the saving waters of Baptism, does not expect of His soldiers any sacrifice, any suffering that He has not experienced beforehand. His service demands of us the patient endurance of many trials, but like a true Leader, He Himself has gone through similar trials and much more difficult ones. None of us can hope to escape the hardship of bodily suffering in some form or another. It is an unavoidable condition of our life of prepara-

tion on earth. But through it all we have ever before us the example of our Master, whose uncomplaining endurance of physical affliction stimulates us to imitation, and encourages us in our feeble efforts to sustain an often doubtful conflict.

We are unconsciously helped in our own suffering when we know that the One we are serving has also had His struggles. Not that the thought of Christ suffering pain gives us any joy, and thus lightens our burden. No, we are helped in a different manner. We feel that the One who has suffered Himself can appreciate our sufferings and can sympathize with us. And the conviction that Christ knows our suffering and sympathizes with us is an almost unlimited source of help and consolation. Again, Christ suffered as man. The same human nature that we possess went through worse afflictions than we shall ever be called upon to endure. There-

fore we need not distrust our strength, nor have any fear for the final issue.

Our Lord's bodily suffering brings Him very close to us; closer, indeed, than the greater sorrow He endured because of the sins of man. We should, it is true, be sorry for the faults of others, and be more saddened by sin than by bodily pain. But as a matter of fact we are not. Hence we do not sympathize so much with our Lord in this phase of His suffering. Most of us pity Him more in His bodily pain on Calvary than in His internal agony in Gethsemane, although the latter was the harder and more momentous of the two. To feel that our Divine Lord, God Himself, was often hungry and thirsty; that many a time His body ached with exhaustion; that often His holy zeal forced Him to work for others, to visit the sick and give them health and strength when He himself was on the verge of physical collapse: this is something that appeals strongly to us and stirs

up sympathy in our hearts. It is easier to understand than the more spiritual, and hence more poignant, pain He endured because of the ingratitude and sin of mankind. Our sympathy is all the keener because this physical suffering was voluntarily endured by Him. It was unnecessary for Him to go through so much pain. He could have accomplished our Redemption at far less cost. And not only does He suffer it voluntarily, but He desires to suffer. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how I am straitened until it be accomplished." Furthermore, physical pain was harder for our Lord to bear than for other men, because He was a perfect specimen of manhood. Those who have made a study of the effects of pain tell us that the more finely organized the human system is, the more perfect the body, the more susceptible it is to pain. Now if we add to all this the fact that Christ's suffering was endured for us, to

redeem us and to give us an example, we have every possible appeal for sympathy, every possible incentive to imitation.

We might divide the physical sufferings our Lord endured into two kinds: those caused, directly or indirectly, by His poverty and zeal, and those that were inflicted upon Him by His enemies. The latter are crowded into the hours that elapsed between His arrest and His death on the cross. The former cover the period of His whole life.

We do not read in the Gospel that our Lord suffered from any illness, any physical ailment. Even if He did we would not expect to find it recorded in the New Testament. He Himself certainly would not mention it, and the Evangelists chose only those details that were most essential in the work of propagating and instructing the infant Church. Whether or not He suffered from physical maladies is unimportant. There was enough torture crowded

into the last hours of His life to afford us more than sufficient material for thought and imitation. But we can be certain that He did suffer from all the discomfort, inconvenience and positive pain that poverty brings with it; and that His zeal for souls often resulted in bodily exhaustion and its consequent suffering.

What pains poverty causes can be understood only by the poor who actually experience them. Possibly not so bitter as the pain of disease, but often more lasting and far-reaching, they color every phase of life, affect almost every effort. He who is poor must not only undergo the physical discomforts of poverty, but must feel himself constantly hampered in his work, constantly forced to give up opportunities that money would have helped him to embrace.

The Son of Man in the very beginning of His life gives us an example of poverty. For hours His mother and foster-father

had wandered about the town of Bethlehem seeking a lodging, because "there was no room for them at the inn." At last they are forced to take refuge in a stable. Here the God-child is born. The chill night winds blow in through the cracks in the walls. Dumb animals stand near the manger where the Child lies upon a little coarse straw. Here are the throne, the palace, the courtiers of the King of Kings. It is true He is only a Babe, but yet His mind is the mind of God, and He knows the poverty of His surroundings, and His body feels the pain of this wretchedness.

This was the beginning, and so was it all through His life. At Nazareth, it is true, He had a home, but even that peaceful life was not permitted until long years of exile in a foreign country, in Egypt, were over. What sufferings Joseph and Mary and the Infant Jesus endured during their flight into this country and their sojourn there, no one knows. Without means as

they were, they doubtless in the beginning had to beg their bread and seek lodging of others until Joseph could earn enough from his trade to house and support his family.

In Nazareth they lived as the poorest of their neighbors. When Joseph died our Lord Himself worked to support His mother and keep up their little home. At last the thirty years of hidden life came to an end. Jesus from now on abandons His trade of carpenter and lives in absolute dependence on others for food and shelter. He had no home. As He Himself tells us so pathetically, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Consequently, since He had no fixed place of residence, He spent many a night in the open fields or on the mountain side seeking His rest in prayer, striving to overcome the pains of the body by that spiritual intercourse with His Father which alone sustained Him and helped Him to do the

work that a mere man would have been unable to perform.

Poverty caused Him all the natural sufferings it brings to others, but His holy zeal and restless energy in the work of saving souls intensified and added to these sufferings. On one occasion He was hungry and His disciples, having brought food from a neighboring village, gave it to Him and urged Him to partake of it. He refused, so eager was He to instruct a crowd of curious Samaritans who had come to see the man who claimed to be the Christ. His words on this occasion reveal a hidden source of higher nourishment: "I have meat to eat which you know not. . . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me that I may perfect His work."

This is only one instance, but there were many times when our Lord patiently went on with His work of preaching and teaching and doing good to others in spite of the pangs of hunger, or the cruel demands

of the flesh for that rest He was so loath to give it. The incident we have just referred to is narrated by St. John, who gives us a touching picture of the God-man resting weary and footsore by Jacob's well in Samaria.

Our Lord was preaching in Judea when he heard that John the Baptist had been seized and put into prison. Saddened by the news, knowing that His precursor had been treated thus because of his connection with Himself, and feeling that John's imprisonment foreshadowed His own, our Saviour retires from Judea into Galilee, crossing through Samaria. Of course, he traveled on foot, and the journey very likely was a hasty one. Footsore and tired, hungry and thirsty, the Good Shepherd comes to Jacob's well near the village of Sychar. Wearily He rests upon a shaded seat by the well. How human the picture is. His feet and clothes covered with the dust of the road, His face pale with fatigue,

His lips dry and parched, eyes dull and forehead damp with perspiration. The body relaxed, half reclines upon the ancient seat of stone. He is alone. The disciples have gone to the village for food. The sun shines directly overhead, for it is mid-day. Outside the circle of shade about the well, the air is quivering with heat; the glare of reflected light is almost blinding. With eyes closed the weary Saviour seeks a moment's respite from His labors. A woman approaches to draw water from the well. At once fatigue is forgotten in an instinctive desire to save the soul of this poor Samaritan. The Master asks her for a drink, as she draws the water from the well. It is true He is thirsty and needs the refreshing draught, but not for this purpose does He make the request. No; He desires to start a conversation with the woman and gradually reveal to her the wretched state of her soul so that He might pour into that soul the waters of His grace

that spring up into life everlasting. He wins her over, and, together with her, converts the multitude of townspeople that she brings back to Him. Had He indulged His feelings and taken the rest He so well deserved, these souls would not have been won to God. He does more than patiently bear the pains of weariness; He turns them into an occasion of salvation for others.

The every-day sufferings our Lord had to endure because of poverty and zeal called for a continual exercise of patience on His part. And this patient endurance of pains, great in themselves, but slight in comparison with those of His passion and death, was a fitting preparation for the unspeakable tortures of the hours preceding the death on the cross. It is in this short space of time that we find concentrated all the pain that could possibly be inflicted on man. Every part of the body, every limb, every nerve, every sense suffered an exquisite torture. Hardly had

the first mockery of a trial been finished than the suffering began. During the long, weary hours of the night our Divine Lord was subject to the insults of the soldiers, who whiled away their vigil by striking the Lamb of God, spitting in His face, taunting Him, treating Him with every form of contumely.

The Jews were forced to observe some semblance of formality in condemning our Lord; so they had to wait until dawn before bringing Him into the presence of the Sanhedrin for final trial. How long this time must have appeared to Him can be partly appreciated by those who have spent the night tossing on a bed of sickness; those whose bodily pain or mental anxiety have made sleep impossible; those who have heard hour after hour strike while they waited eagerly for the first light of dawn to appear in the eastern sky. For such as these what a source of strength, an inspiration to patient endurance, is the ex-

ample of Christ, the God-man, submitting without a word of complaint to the coarse insults and rough handling of the brutal soldiers during the long hours of the night, while He waited for the death sentence. How He must have welcomed the coming of the guard to bring him before the Sanhedrin, even though this summons meant greater torture for Him.

The second trial is soon over. Christ is taken to Pilate, then to Herod, and at last back once more to Pilate for final sentence. This weak and wavering ruler fears to condemn the accused prisoner, and in his indecision thinks to appease the people by ordering Him to be scourged. Let us draw near to the soldiers who guard our Lord. Let us follow them as they lead Him to an upper corner of the courtyard of Pilate's palace, to a marble post about eighteen inches high. In the top of this post is an iron ring. Here the victim is stripped of His clothes. His hands are

bound and He is forced to bend over the low post while His arms are being fastened to the iron ring by a stout cord. A cloth is placed over His head to hide the tears and stifle the cries that might come from the victim. Thus, upon His knees, with His head pressed close to the top of the marble column, the upper part of His body is fully exposed to the torture prepared for Him.

In keen suspense and expectation, one hardly dare draw his breath. Above is the deep, cloudless blue of the eastern sky. The sun, rapidly nearing the meridian, shines warmly and peacefully upon the scene. We can hear an occasional sound from the city. Birds are singing. The light breeze rustles the branches of the palm and olive trees. A soldier stands close by the kneeling Saviour. In his hand is a leathern lash with four thongs. He mounts upon a stone step to get fuller play for his blows. Then, running the lash

through his fingers, he waits the command to begin. The words are spoken. Slowly the thong is raised, suspended a moment in the air, and then brought cruelly down upon the God-man. The whole body quivers with the blow. Moans break from the lips of Jesus. A low murmur of exultation rises from the spectators crowded around. They press closer. Again and again the lash descends with dull, sickening blows that sound strangely out of place in that peaceful quiet. Slowly the executioner goes on with his deadly work. It is nothing new for him. In his eyes Jesus is only an ordinary criminal, and he does not spare Him. His duty is to leave no part untouched by the lash. Every blow must strike a different place, so as to leave no part without pain. Furrow adjoins furrow, lengthwise, then crosswise. Soon the skin comes off in bloody strips. The bones become visible, realizing the words of the Psalmist: "The wicked have wrought

upon my back, they have numbered my bones." Even His face and eyes did not escape, for it was a trick of the executioners to lash the victim's face in order to increase the pain of his punishment.

For an hour the scourging lasted. Blood began to flow after the first blow was struck. And now the whole of the back and chest and shoulders is one mass of blood and torn flesh. "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is sad. From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness in Him. Wounds and bruises and swelling sores. They are not dressed, nor bound up, nor fomented with oil." At last it is over. The cords are cut. Our Lord sinks to the ground, wet with His sacred blood. All His strength is gone. He can do no more than feebly moan and turn His eyes to heaven in prayer.

His torturers are too impatient to allow Him even a few moments of relief. They

rudely raise him from the ground and half lead, half carry Him back again to the center of the courtyard. Here they await the arrival of Pilate, who had not remained to witness the scourging. To while away the time and afford themselves amusement, they devise another scheme of torture for our Lord. They had heard of the treatment He had received at the hands of Herod, how He had been clothed in a white robe and hailed in mockery as king. So they put once more a royal robe upon Him. But this is not a sufficient sign of royalty for them. Some coarse rushes are used to plait a crown, and into these are placed lengthwise branches of thorns taken from the wood collected for their fire. Roughly they place this upon our Lord's head and press it down until the sharp points of the thorns penetrate the flesh and cause a crimson crown of blood to encircle the sacred brow. A reed is placed in His hands as a scepter, and then the ruffians draw back to

contemplate their work and give mock obeisance to the newly-crowned king. A large piece of wood is brought forward to serve as a throne. One of the number impatiently pushes the tottering victim into the rude seat. He is too weak to stand the force of the blow, staggers and falls upon His knees, lacerated by the blows of the scourge. He puts out His poor, manacled hands for support, and then stiffly pulls Himself up to the seat and sinks into it. His crown has been disarranged by the fall. A soldier snatches the reed from His hands and strikes the circlet of thorns a rough blow to fasten it more securely. Again the pain of the first crowning is renewed as the points are driven into the broken and bleeding flesh. Then they pass before Him, and one by one salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews." Some spit in His face, others strike Him with the fist. Each tries to devise some new insult. Under it all the God-man is silent, utters no complaint,

gives no evidence of suffering save the tears that physical weakness and intense sorrow force from His tender eyes.

For the moment the torture is interrupted. Christ is taken by Pilate to the balcony and there placed before the gaze of all. "Ecce Homo" (Behold the Man). Blood is flowing from the forehead, still encircled by the crown of thorns. The eyes are half closed. Lips pallid and compressed. The face is furrowed by the deep, raw ridges left by the lash. Through the loose folds of the mantle gape wide wounds in the chest and shoulders. The bound hands, trembling, still clasp the reed between them. But through all this sorrow and degradation are revealed the dignity and unshaken fortitude of perfect manhood. No pity moves the people. Sullenly they stand in silence for a moment. Then breaks forth the savage cry: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" One more fruitless attempt of Pilate to put off the death penalty,

and then the Son of God is given over to the Jews, and, carrying His cross, is led by them to Calvary.

The cross, rough and heavy, resting upon the shoulder of our Lord, wears a deep furrow in the flesh, becoming every moment more painful as He staggers along. To further annoy Him, the crowd throws dust and pebbles at Him, pushes Him with sticks, casts stones and other obstacles in His path. The sun by this time is at its height. Its rays fall mercilessly upon our Lord, increasing the agony of thirst. Perspiration pours from His brow. A holy woman wipes His face with a towel, and Simon is forced to help Him bear His cross.

Slowly the procession passes through the city and reaches Calvary. The cross is dropped to the ground. The victim's clothes, adhering to the many wounds in His body, are torn roughly from Him. He stretches Himself upon the cross. The

executioners seize the right hand, place it flat upon the cross-beam, palm upward. A nail, four-sided and about three inches long, is driven through the flesh, deep into the wood, with one strong blow of the hammer. Then the left hand is fastened in the same cruel manner. Blood gushes forth, and a moan of pain is wrung from the lips of the Divine Sufferer. His lower limbs, involuntarily contracted and drawn up by the pain of the blows, are roughly stretched flat upon the wood, and each foot is nailed fast. Writhing with agony, the body strives to find a position less painful. From head to feet a violent convulsion passes through it. The fingers and toes contract. The heart beats rapidly. Hoarse sobs break from the lips. Tears flow down the cheeks, once more caked with blood and dust and perspiration. The eyes now wide-opened plead for pity and relief. Then the limbs relax, the eyes close; and quickly, for fear lest the victim die too soon, the cross is

raised, plunged into the hole prepared for it, and made secure by heaping stones and dirt about the base.

For three hours the Victim hangs upon His gibbet. Every nerve in the body throbs with pain. Only physical perfection could bear the agony so long. But the endurance even of a God-man cannot last forever. Because He is man there must be an end. Nature yields. The moans of agony die away. The breath comes slower and slower. At last a long, convulsive gasp. The head falls forward. The heart ceases to beat. It is over.

Suffering comes to all of us, but never suffering like this. Our Lord wished every pain of body to be inflicted upon Himself, and that, too, in the highest possible degree, so that we, in all our pains, our physical anguish, might find in Him a model of patient endurance, as well as an unfailing source of strength to help us imitate His example. The nearer we are to the pillar

in Pilate's courtyard, to the cross-crowned hill of Calvary, the more insignificant our own bodily afflictions must appear. And the nearer our hearts are to the heart of our suffering Lord, the closer will be our imitation of His patience, the more bravely shall we bear our own little crosses.

The world to-day has, for the most part, lost sight of that rude cross of Golgotha; and its spirit is far from the spirit of Christ, who not only bore without complaint the ignominy and torture of the cross, but even longed for this baptism of blood. Pain is looked upon by most men as the greatest of evils. Every precaution is taken to avoid it. When it does come, the spirit groans beneath it, and often death is longed for and even self-inflicted in order to bring relief from that suffering which the will, unaided by grace, can no longer endure.

All men who suffer claim our pity, but especially sad is the sight of those who are blind to the one only means of relief; those

who struggle helplessly against the inevitable pains of the flesh, that grow all the more bitter in proportion as we fail to bear them with the spirit of Christian patience.

An artist has painted the picture of the Blessed Catherine Emmerich in a way that strikingly brings home to us the practical application of the lesson of the cross. The holy woman is sitting upon a rude couch, her head swathed in bandages. To render more bearable the intense agony, her hands are pressed close to her throbbing temples. On her countenance there is the unavoidable evidence of physical suffering, not the hard, cruel lines that torture forces to the face of the stoic, nor yet the wild, despairing look of him who neither seeks nor hopes for any help from above; but, on the contrary, a softened expression of resigned endurance. Natural weakness and instinctive repugnance make themselves evident, but they have been forced into the background by mingled looks of shame,

compassion, love, hope, resignation. Shame, that she should think of complaining, or even allow her mind to dwell upon her own sufferings when there on her lap is the image of her crucified Lord, the sight of which brings for the moment forgetfulness of pain in the overwhelming wave of pity that, sweeping over her soul, leaves in its wake the brightness of a deeper love, a higher hope, a firmer resignation to the will of Him who permits pain to afflict us.

And thus it is, though in varying degrees, that the cross of the crucified Lord brings true comfort into the hearts of those who seek in it their surest relief. The world looked on in wonder at the patient heroism of the martyrs to the faith, who went rejoicing to their torture. It still stands awed at the calm, hopeful death of those who die fortified by the rites of the church, and holding in their hands the cross that helps them bear their pain.

Would that all could grasp the meaning

of sickness and suffering. Would that all could realize that no reward can be earned without a struggle; that no crown is worn unless the one who wears it has proved himself brave not only in action but also in endurance. Men are still as foolish and slow of heart as were the two disciples who accompanied our Lord to Emmaus, and to whom, since their faith in the Master had been weakened by His crucifixion, He spoke thus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so enter into His glory?"

Here indeed is the secret of suffering. As Christ did not enter into His glory until He had passed through pain and sorrow, so neither may we hope to enter into the glory our Father has prepared for us unless we patiently bear our trials and sufferings. It is only by imitating Him in His suffering that we can hope to share in His glory, that glory which surpasses all understanding, and far exceeds any reward we could hope to earn even by the most

perfect patience and resignation to God's will. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."

CHAPTER IV

PERSEVERANCE IN COURAGE

> "I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee."—John xvii, 4-5.

IT is on the eve of His crucifixion that our Saviour, regarding His passion and death as already finished, speaks these words in His farewell discourse to His apostles. The end of His life is at hand. The period of His public ministry is finished. And now, looking back over the years of penance, labor and pain, He sees that He has left nothing undone, and with the calm assurance of triumph offers the completed, all-perfect work to His Heavenly Father: "I have glorified thee on

earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

To accomplish His task all the powers of soul and body have been called into play, not merely for a time, for a few brilliant, stupendous undertakings, but consistently and perseveringly, day in and day out, in the face of all obstacles, great and small. Through sufferings of mind and sufferings of body; through much adversity and little consolation; through long weeks of weary, monotonous work, when words and acts of love and warning fell unfruitful upon the dulled hearts of careless, unheeding hearers; through it all, unmoved by the fatigue and discouragement of repeated effort without result, the will of Christ kept spurring on to even more persistent and powerful action every faculty of soul and body, until at last the work is perfect. Thus it is that perseverance, after penetrating into its every part, finally consummates and

crowns the life work of our Lord and calls for its reward.

As God, it is true, He possessed from the beginning the glory of His Father, but now He claims for His humanity that share in this glory which He as man has merited by His life of sacrifice, of daily immolation of self in the performance of a task necessitating a constant conflict with opposition that would have effectually discouraged a will less firm than His.

In treating of the obstacles with which our Lord had to contend, we are not at present concerned so much with each individual obstacle and the struggle it involved, as we are with the continuous occurrence of these difficulties, with that phase of fortitude which is brought into play by the repeated call to do battle with the enemy, who, though repulsed time and again, seems to gain strength with each defeat and is ever ready for renewed attacks, leaving the victor of one combat no time to rest, no op-

portunity to enjoy the fruits of victory. Hardly is one struggle over, hardly is the stress of one violent exertion lessened, than once more all the power of the soul is called into play to go through the same effort again. And this goes on with no cessation until the work is accomplished, and the will rests in the possession of that glory which frees it from the assaults of its enemies. It is this courage in continuous struggle that constitutes perseverance, and it is this view of fortitude in our Lord's life that we are now taking.

Prominent among the difficulties our Lord encountered all through His public ministry were those occasioned by the Scribes and Pharisees. They were most jealous of their power, and like all hypocrites were constantly fearful and suspicious. The wonderful miracles performed by our Lord, beginning with the changing of the water into wine at Cana, attracted the attention of all classes. As a conse-

quence, wherever He went He was followed by crowds of people. Of course, the suspicions of the leaders of the people were aroused, and after the daring action of this new Reformer in driving the buyers and sellers from the temple, several emissaries were kept at work watching Him. The hatred of the Sanhedrin forced Him to leave Judea and go to Capharnaum. Here too He found Scribes and Pharisees gathered together, not only those from Galilee, but others also who had been sent as spies from Jerusalem. These men followed Him about wherever He went, for the purpose of detecting Him in the commission of some offense, and of finding out what His motives were. They are present when He cures the paralytic and are openly scandalized by His fearlessness in publicly granting pardon of sins to the man He is about to restore to health.

Although He is fully aware that His enemies are watching Him, our Lord does not

cease His work of preaching and helping others. He is prudent, however, and is careful to admonish those whom He has helped not to tell others about it. Nor does he expose Himself needlessly in those places where it would be dangerous for Him to exercise His ministry. Still, when duty called Him, when He felt that His presence was necessary, He did not hesitate to appear in the midst of His open enemies. And so we see Him at Jerusalem during the second Passover of His ministry. Here at the pool of Bethesda He performs a wonderful cure, and this on the Sabbath day. The members of the Great Council of the Jews hear of this miracle, and from that time on strive to bring about His death. They watch Him closely to detect any infringement of the Mosaic Law. How close this watch is can be understood when we read that one Sabbath day, while our Lord and His disciples are passing through a field, the latter are detected in the act of

gathering a few grains of wheat to appease their hunger. At once the Pharisees accuse the Master of permitting His followers to break the law of the Sabbath. Our Lord's answer is kind and convincing. He shows His persecutors that their accusation is foolish and unfounded; but their enmity is only increased, and they seek all the more to interfere with His work and stir up the people against Him.

It was of course most trying for our Lord to endure this insidious and persistent opposition, but up to the summer of the second year of His ministry, all the attempts of His enemies seemed to be unsuccessful. The more they tried to move the people against Him, the greater were the crowds that gathered about the Divine Preacher, so that the eagerness of His hearers and their apparently sincere response to His unceasing efforts afforded Him some consolation to counteract the bitterness of His enemies. But during the latter half of

His ministry the plots of the Scribes and Pharisees met with rapidly increasing success, and the popularity of the Great Preacher began slowly and steadily to wane. From now on the struggle grew more and more difficult. The enemies of our Lord were quick to see their advantage and pressed Him at every point, growing bolder with each victory.

Our Saviour's fearlessness in associating with and preaching to all classes of men, with sinners of every type, with publicans and Samaritans and even pagans, stirred up the mass of the people against Him; and He found it increasingly difficult to secure in His hearers that sympathetic condition of mind and heart necessary for the success of His mission. Consequently for the most part, the seed fell upon barren soil, and while the first half of His ministry resulted in the conversion of many, the latter half not only produced little or no

fruit, but even witnessed the falling away of former followers.

Gloomy and threatening was the beginning of the third year of His public life. In Judea "He would no longer walk . . . because the Jews sought to kill Him." The warm welcome Galilee had heretofore always accorded Him now grew cold. Even Capharnaum, the scene of many miracles and wonderful conversions, began to look upon Him with suspicion. Nowhere could He go without meeting opposition. And so for a time He turns to pagan lands for refuge. But only for a time. Soon He returns to Capharnaum and from there dares to go right into the enemies' stronghold, Jerusalem, where He teaches publicly in the temple. He works miracles and attracts great crowds. Then He retreats before the wrath of the Pharisees and goes across the Jordan to Perea. This is Herod's domain and is also hostile to Him. The Pharisees are here, too, and they strive

to drive Him away, saying: "Depart and get thee hence, for Herod hath a mind to kill thee." Our Lord answers boldly, defying His enemies: "Go and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils, and do cures today and to-morrow, and the third day I am consummated." He had work to do in Perea, and until this work was done not even the threat of Herod's vengeance could drive Him away. Only when His task beyond the Jordan was accomplished, and not until then, did He go back to Jerusalem.

Many times did His enemies lay snares to entrap Him in speech or action so that they might have some shadow of excuse for accusing Him of breaking one or more of the many laws added from time to time to the original Mosaic Code. Meeting with no success in these attempts, they turn to another source. They try to bring our Lord into disfavor with the Roman rulers. He is asked whether it is lawful to pay tribute or not. The answer completely

outwits His questioners: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's." Nevertheless, they falsely charge Him with forbidding the payment of tribute. When He wins a victory they neutralize, by lying or other subterfuge, His success, and even turn it against Him.

Toward the close of His mission our Lord works two great miracles in the heart of Judea; Lazarus is raised to life, and sight is given to a poor, blind man. Every one hears of these miracles. Something must be done lest our Lord regain His former hold upon the fickle Jewish people. The surest plan is to remove the cause of their anxiety by bringing about the death of our Saviour as soon as possible. Pharisees and Sadducees, and even the Herodians, hated followers of Herod and favorers of the Roman rule, are gathered together to lay plans for the death of the Messiah. This time their efforts are suc-

cessful, but only because our Lord's mission is nearly ended. It is the time decreed from all eternity for the consummation of the work, for the final sacrifice. Our Lord yields, gives up the battle against His visible enemies, but only that He might win upon Calvary the great victory over the powers of darkness, over sin and Satan. For this decisive conflict the many struggles with the Scribes and Pharisees, the visible emissaries of the devil, the hidden master, were a necessary preparation. Now the subjects give over the Victim to their ruler, and the two great Leaders, the One of light, life and goodness, the other of darkness, death and evil, meet in the final struggle of the cross.

When we apply to ourselves the perseverance of our Saviour, and take it as an example for imitation, we must remember that the object of perseverance was not the same in His life as it is in ours. He worked to save others, we to save ourselves. We

accomplish our salvation by advancing in virtue; our Lord did not need to advance in virtue, as He was perfect from the beginning. But the character of perseverance should be the same in our lives as it was in His. Just as He worked unceasingly to remove difficulties opposing the salvation of others, so we must perseveringly strive to attain the virtue He possessed and thus remove the obstacles opposing our salvation.

Our Lord had His open enemies, so have we ours. They strive continually to weary us in well-doing, many times by open attack, but more often by the insidious influence of evil example. Our enemies are those fellow-creatures whose company we cannot avoid, or whose example we cannot help seeing, whose unbelief and lax morality are a constant menace to our salvation. Their hidden master, as in the case of our Lord's enemies, is no other than the devil himself, who is just as jealous as ever of

our Saviour, just as unremitting now as ever in his efforts to destroy His kingdom in the hearts of men. Were our struggle with the enemies of our salvation an open one, were we permitted to reap the fruits of victory and enjoy some moments of security from all attack, it would not be so hard for us to persevere. But as it was with our Lord, so it is with us. There is no truce, no cessation of hostilities. Our enemies, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, seem to grow stronger, or at least bolder, with each defeat. If they fail to make any impression by open attack, they try secret opposition, even appearing to us in the guise of friends. Sometimes the devil gives us a few moments of fancied security, after we have gained a great, an apparently decisive victory. For example, a man breaks off relations with certain persons who have been for him an occasion of sin. He succeeds in keeping away from them altogether. As a consequence he feels

that he has done something pleasing to God. Outwitted for the moment, it is most likely that the devil may allow that man temporary freedom from temptation on this particular point, only to attack him in the meantime in some more vulnerable part. And this latter struggle may be harder than the former. Of one thing we may be sure: the devil never gives up. Hence freedom from open attack is often a sure sign of some hidden attempt to undermine the foundation of faith and morality. Therefore if we have no open enemies of our salvation we must be continually on the lookout for secret opposition, and at all times we must be watchful lest the influence of those with whom we are brought into contact have a tendency to gradually weaken our powers of resistance, until a breach has been effected in the rampart of grace that guards the purity of our souls.

The Scribes and Pharisees did not always show signs of open enmity to our

Lord, but often came to Him, smooth-spoken and friendly in manner, with the feigned desire of learning the law from Him. Our Lord met these hidden attacks just as firmly and skilfully as He met the open assaults. He would have no truce with hypocrites. Our perseverance in surmounting the obstacles that come from contact with the world of careless unbelief or positive enmity to Christ must be modeled upon His. We must "watch and pray" without ceasing.

Our Lord's unceasing conflict with His enemies would have been made much easier for Him had He received from His disciples, from the people whom He instructed and helped in many ways, some return proportionate to the efforts He made in their behalf. It was hard enough to meet with the daily opposition of enemies, but to feel His efforts impeded, neutralized and sometimes even opposed, though unintentionally, by those who were near to Him, those

whom He counted as His friends, those who were being trained to carry on His ministry of salvation after His Ascension: this was a bitter trial for Him, an ever-present difficulty in the way of His perseverance in the work undertaken. His followers were too carnal to grasp the deep meaning of His teachings. Nor did they seem to understand the true, spiritual nature of His mission any better in the later period of His ministry, than at the very beginning. As far as the great mass of His converts is concerned, we do not wonder so much at this dullness of intellect and coldness of heart. But when it comes to His apostles who lived with Him for three years and had the advantage of the closest intercourse with Him, we cannot understand their continued misconception of the most fundamental doctrines of the New Law. They were prompt enough to leave all material things to follow the Master, but of self they did not make a complete

surrender; their wills did not bend in everything to the Divine Will. Consequently there was not that close, sympathetic union with our Lord that would have lightened His trials very much. Nay, they even unwittingly opposed His efforts by their blindness of intellect and obstinacy of will.

Three times our Saviour told them of His approaching passion and death, but "they understood not the things that were said." The first time that He speaks openly of His coming crucifixion, St. Peter, who had just before this made his great declaration of faith in the divinity of his Master, is bold enough to oppose our Lord's will. St. Matthew tells us that "Peter taking Him, began to rebuke Him, saying: Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee." Our Lord firmly reproves him: "Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me: because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." Even this reproof failed to

produce any permanent effect, for right after the third prediction, which is made almost on the eve of Holy Week, and is even plainer than the two preceding ones, the mother of James and John makes her most untimely and unreasonable request that her two sons have the first places in Christ's Kingdom, thinking that this Kingdom is to be one of earthly grandeur and glory. And when the end did come the closest companions of the crucified Saviour were scandalized and almost lost faith in their Master. Nor could they at first credit the truth of the Resurrection, though this too had been foretold.

Outside the treason of Judas, there is no direct enmity, no intentional opposition from the followers of our Lord. But the bitter disappointment He felt when He saw them so heedless of the one great purpose of His mission, so intensely selfish as to forget or misunderstand the lessons of self-denial He was constantly giving them

both by word of mouth and by the example of His own life; this was an obstacle to perseverance becoming more formidable the longer He remained on earth. It is true there were rare instances of evident progress, some gleams of consolation for our Lord, like the confession of St. Peter: "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God." But as this remarkable apprehension of a vital truth was followed by a complete misunderstanding of the same Son of God's prediction of His passion, so in other instances was the fleeting flash of light succeeded by darkness all the deeper because of the temporary relief. Rare manifestations of spiritual perception and unselfish devotion on the part of His followers only made their habitual dullness and self-seeking all the harder for our Lord to bear.

The struggle of our Lord to surmount the difficulties placed in His way by the poor material with which He had to work

is analogous to the struggle we have with our lower nature, with the tendencies to evil that continually put before us obstacles to our perseverance. As our Lord strove to train His followers so that He might use them as aids in His mission of saving souls, so we strive to turn all our faculties toward our own great object, our eternal happiness. But as our Lord repeatedly failed in His attempts to instill into the disciples the proper spirit of detachment and unselfishness, so we too never succeed in entirely controlling the lower inclinations, in making them perfectly obedient to the dictates of right reason. Because of Adam's fall, because too of the habits of sin contracted by ourselves, because of our carelessness and many acts of open rebellion, the passions that should serve only as a means of salvation not only fail to perform their proper duty, but impede and often render of no avail the efforts of the soul to serve its Master.

We feel this conflict going on within us. Strive as hard as we are able, we cannot free ourselves from the struggle. We concentrate our powers on some particular passion, and in the meantime another one strives to escape our control, and attacks viciously the weakened forces we have left to combat it. And then, perhaps, after years of effort and concentration, *e.g.*, on our ruling passion, we find that the least breath of temptation fans into a sudden blaze the smoldering fire that we had thought practically extinguished. Many a time we feel discouraged, tempted to give up trying. In the words of St. Paul we cry out almost in despair: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But with the example of the Master before us we gain new strength and confidence. We see more clearly that our deliverance from the combat is "the grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord."

And with this hope we firmly set our face toward the future. The natural instruments for working out our salvation are weak, it is true, and most untrustworthy; but there is a supernatural help that enables us to persevere in spite of difficulties, in spite of poor material, until our work is done and we are delivered from "the body of this death."

Another class of difficulties opposing our Lord's perseverance had its origin in the very nature of the work He was performing. The purpose of His mission, redemption and salvation for all men, was magnificent beyond all human conception, so also was the motive. But the performance of this work indescribably grand when viewed as a whole, called for an almost countless number of apparently trifling details. Taken in themselves, one by one, these little details, these oft-repeated words of instruction, warning and exhortation, these constantly recurring acts of self-

denial and benevolence, must have been, naturally speaking, most monotonous, especially in view of the increasing opposition of many of those for whose benefit they were intended.

Let us not for a moment lose sight of the human side of our Lord's character. Let us not forget that He had the nature of man as well as that of God. It is true, He did not allow Himself to be swerved from His course, He did not allow Himself to weaken in His efforts by reason of the monotony and fatigue and natural repugnance inseparable from His work. But, nevertheless, monotony and fatigue and natural repugnance were present, and He felt their presence just as much as a mere man would have felt it; only His will always rose above them and became, if that were possible, even firmer by reason of the difficulties. We may therefore, without any lack of respect, picture Him as feeling, just as much as we would, the difficulty of

going on day after day patiently repeating the self-same instruction to people who should long since have taken His words to heart and acted accordingly. How hard, *e.g.,* it must have been for Him to go on correcting over and over again the false ideas even His closest followers held as to the nature of His Kingdom. Not merely once or twice or three times does he tell them plainly that His Kingdom is not of this world, but we can safely say that every day of His public ministry He must have given by word or example more than sufficient opportunity to form a correct conception of His mission among men.

His work involved the cure of the sick, the giving of sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and even the raising of the dead to life. Sometimes He met with a grateful appreciation of His kindness. Other times He did not. And even when He did receive some return, the gratitude for the most part was short-lived. Our

Lord knew all this beforehand, but still He kept on in His work of doing good.

He came to establish a new law, a law of love, in place of the old Mosaic code with its wealth of forms and ceremonies. And yet He was scrupulous in observing all the details of this code that were authoritatively imposed. A merely human reformer would have shaken off at once the shackles of this old legislation which had now outlived its usefulness. But our Lord possessed the patience of self-conscious power. He could wait until the appointed time was come, and in the meantime He lived up to all the laws that bound His fellow-countrymen, although He knew how little these laws affected the hearts of most of the people, and how far they were from enkindling the fire of that love He came to cast upon the earth. No one dared question His orthodoxy, even on the slightest essential point. He was a true Hebrew up to the end. The last act of His public

ministry is the eating of the Paschal supper in the upper chamber of Jerusalem.

Another trial for our Lord's perseverance comes from the repugnance caused by frequent intercourse with sinners. He was obliged to move among, to come into contact with, people of the worst type. We would have to understand the purity of our Lord's soul in order to appreciate the instinctive repugnance He must have felt at being thus forced to deal repeatedly with sins that were unspeakably repulsive to His sacred heart. And yet there is no time when He shirks this self-imposed task. Whether He is talking to the guilty woman brought to Him in Jerusalem, or to the Samaritan by the well, or to Judas at the Last Supper, we find the same loving perseverance that characterizes His intercourse with the purest of His companions. It is all part of His work, and every detail, even the most distasteful, receives its due share of attention. No cessation of inter-

est and activity until the whole scheme of redemption and salvation is worked out and stands completed in all its perfect, spotless beauty.

Each one of us is concerned in this great life work of our Lord's. Each one of us is drawing from it the various graces he needs to perfect his own life work, his eternal salvation. We too have our little details to look after. We too suffer from the tediousness, the fatigue, and even, at times, the repugnance that come from constantly striving to perform our daily duties. One of the strongest temptations to discouragement, one of the most dangerous obstacles to perseverance that we have to encounter is the spiritual weariness that often afflicts those who try to lead regular lives of piety and recollection. At best God rarely gives sensible consolation. We cannot expect at all times to feel good spiritually. And to keep on performing over and over again the same acts of religion,

saying the same words of prayer repeatedly when we feel little or no fervor; this requires a more than average amount of will power.

Difficulties to perseverance in well-doing are many, but every obstacle we meet with in our work has a counterpart, and that, too, in a far higher degree, in the life of our Lord. We object that little or no fruit is evident as a result of our efforts; we make apparently no progress. Our Saviour answers the objection: "When did I perceive in My work any result at all proportionate to the effort put forth? Was there not on the contrary bitter opposition in many cases, even from those who should have been most grateful? Where was the result of three years' work on the first Good Friday?" We say that a life of well-doing involves the performance of many things repugnant to our feelings, and the doing of them so many times over and over again. Our Lord asks us in return: "Are you

more sensitive to this repugnance than I? Was sacrifice and the monotony of repeated sacrifice any less tedious for Me than it is for you?" And then, driven to our last argument, we say that perseverance is almost impossible without the encouragement of interior consolation. And for a reply the past is brought before us and we see a figure prostrate in a garden, praying in the agony of interior desolation for strength to do the will of the Father; and we hear the cry of anguish on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

As fatigue, repugnance and apparent failure to produce results did not discourage our Lord, so neither must they discourage us. Not by brilliant, isolated acts of virtue, even though they be heroic, is the crown of eternal life to be obtained, but by careful, unflagging attention to every little act in our daily lives. It is these little acts that make the magnificent grandeur, the unsurpassed beauty of the work of our salvation.

n the perfection of the completed task we se sight of the many parts that blend harmoniously into one flawless whole. But et it is only by long, hard labor; only by n almost countless number of words, houghts and deeds; only by unceasing perverance in all trials, both great and small, iat the work becomes so beautiful when nished, so perfect and beautiful, indeed, iat when we are called upon to present it o our Father in Heaven we may say in he words of our divine Model, "I have lorified thee on earth, I have finished the ork which thou gavest me to do."

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SCHUYLER, HENRY C.
AUTHOR
The Courage of Christ.
TITLE
DATE DUE
BORROWER'S NAME
1967
Nov. 14
Bro. Ph
STORAGE
46674
PRINTED IN U. S.